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Your Indoor Outdoor guide to gardening **FEBRUARY**

ORNAMENTAL PLANT AND FRUIT TREE PRUNING

Pruning in late winter or early spring (February-March), prior to bud break, allows rapid formation of callus tissue to close the wound and prevent infection. Although pruning should be part of ongoing landscaping maintenance, not all plants need yearly pruning.

One of the primary goals of pruning is actually related to plant health and that is to remove all dead, diseased and broken branches. This should be done whenever it is noticed, but is most apparent in winter when the deciduous trees and shrubs are bare.

Now observe the plant for rubbing branches or poor branch structure, and correct this when the plant is dormant. If two branches are rubbing together, remove the least attractive one. Keep branches that have the wider branch angle as they are generally more structurally sound. Water sprouts and suckers should also be removed. Except for multi-stemmed trees or shrubs, you should prune to allow a central dominant leader for a tree.

Shade trees seldom need pruning once they are established. Never remove the central leader of a shade tree. All can be successfully pruned while dormant, although maples, black walnuts and birches may be best pruned in very late summer when sap isn't flowing.

Where flowers are produced on new wood, generally summer-flowering plants, prune in late winter before the buds swell. Some summer flowering shrubs to prune in late winter include: Abelia, beautyberry, butterfly bush, coralberry, Hydrangea (summer-flowering), Potentilla, Rose of Sharon, smoke tree, summer sweet, Spiraea, (summer-flowering). Some plants with both deciduous and evergreen forms – Cotoneaster, Euonymus, privet and Viburnum are also pruned now.

Evergreens pruned in late winter include arborvitae, boxwood, cedar, Chamaecyparis, fir, juniper and yew. When pruning evergreen, be careful not to prune off all leaves on a branch as these plants do not regenerate leaves from bare branches.

Fruit trees are best pruned while dormant. Cherry, plum and pear trees should be pruned from February through April. Apple trees have the widest range of pruning time – from November through April. Peach trees have the narrowest preferred range – from late March to late April.

By Linda Wiles, Penn State Extension Agent

BEAUTIFUL THIS MONTH

- ❖ Perennials: Ornamental grasses.
- ❖ Trees: Hamamelis vernalis (witch hazel).

SEASONAL

- ❖ Most of your gardening efforts will continue to focus on indoor gardening and planning activities.

- ❖ Dried herbs and flowers can make wreaths for Valentine's Day.

PLANNING

- ❖ Seed and planting catalogs can still be ordered to assist in your selection of plants for the garden.
- ❖ This is a good time continue your review of garden books and magazines.
- ❖ Check notes from last year to see what you want to do the same and what should be changed.
- ❖ Chart vegetable and flower gardens on graph paper. This will help in rotation of vegetables from last year and assist in knowing how many of each plant will be needed.

HOUSEPLANTS

- ❖ Continue to check on indoor humidity levels. Plants may need to be misted to supplement the existing humidity. You may want to consider adding a humidifier to improve conditions for your family and your plants.
- ❖ Orchids can be repotted after they have finished blooming.
- ❖ Indoor plants will begin to need more water towards the end of the month. Start fertilizing the plants soon after you increase watering.
- ❖ Try germinating plants from fruit seeds: oranges, grapefruits, lemons, tangerines or pomegranates are all good candidates. Put them in warm moist soil and check for germination within six weeks.

BULBS

- ❖ The premature emergence of spring bulbs can be sometimes be delayed by watering the soil and applying a layer of organic mulch.
- ❖ Start tuberous begonias in late February or early March.
- ❖ Check stored summer bulbs, tubers and corms. Discard any with soft spots or disease.

COMPOST

- ❖ Covering compost piles with several inches of leaves or a tarp can help hold heat and continue the composting process.
- ❖ Chip all leaves, dead branches and other plant debris from pruning and deadwood collection during the winter. Apply this as mulch for trees and shrubs. Fine material can be added to the compost pile.

VEGETABLE GARDENS

- ❖ Make plans for your vegetable garden and order plants and seeds as indicated.

SMALL FRUITS

- ❖ Select grape varieties that will mature in your zone, as cold weather pockets are common. Home vineyards can be pruned right before bud-break.
- ❖ Fertilize grapes, brambles, and blueberries.
- ❖ Only purchase berry plants that are certified as disease free. Using non-certified plants may result in soil contamination and reduced yields.

TREE FRUITS

- ❖ This is a good time to prune, as long as it is not done right before a heavy freeze. Best time to prune apples.
- ❖ Continue to control mice and watch for rabbit damage.
- ❖ Peach and nectarine trees can be pruned heavy, removing half of last year's growth to produce new shoots for next year's crop.

HERBS

- ❖ Kitchen herbs brought indoors over winter may be getting leggy. Cut back some to improve the plants habit and use the trimmings in potpourri.

LAWN

- ❖ If there was not an adequate supply of rain or snow in December and January, then the lawn may need to be watered.
- ❖ If you had a lot of mites in the lawn last spring, watering now will reduce the problem for this spring.

PERENNIALS, BIENNIALS & ANNUALS

- ❖ Begin sowing seeds of hardy annuals for transplant in early spring.

TREES & SHRUBS

- ❖ Most ornamental trees can be pruned in late February, except maple, birch and walnut.
- ❖ Condition seeds needing stratification. If put in a cold frame or freezer now, they still have time to germinate and grow this year.
- ❖ Prune summer flowering trees and shrubs now. Select relatively warm days in late February or early March where the weather is predicted to not be very cold for a few days.
- ❖ Root-prune plants you will want to move in spring next year.

WATER GARDENS

- ❖ Continue to monitor ponds to remove debris that may fall in over winter.